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Dealing with Conflict: Take it Step by Step

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Step 1. Cool off! Being out of control will keep you from solving the problem.

- Count down backwards from 10.
- Close your eyes and take deep breaths.
- Think of a peaceful place or something that makes you happy.
- Slowly say over and over to yourself, "Take it easy."



Step 2. Keep it real! Figure out what's really bothering you.

- Do you not agree?
- Did someone say or do something that made you mad or hurt your feelings?
- Are you feeling the way you do now because of something else that upset you in the past?
- Is this a one-time problem or one that keeps happening?

Step 3. Deal with the issue.

- Find a time when you can talk in private.
- Keep your voice calm and your body relaxed. Make eye contact to show you are serious.
- Say exactly what is bothering you. Share how you feel by using sentences that start with "I." Don't blame or accuse the other person.
 - Instead of: "You never want to hang out with me anymore." Try: "I feel left out when you hang out with your other friends."
 - Instead of: "You always pick on me in class." Try: "I feel singled out when you call on me more than other students."
 - Instead of: "You're so pushy." Try: "I feel upset when you don't listen to what I think."
- Keep the conflict between you and only the others involved. Don't ask friends to take sides.

Step 4. Listen. The other person might see the problem in a different way. You may each have a different point of view, but neither of you is wrong. Make sure to listen to his or her side of the story.

- Make eye contact. This shows you are interested in what the other person is saying and willing to solve the problem.
- Listen for what is behind the words—like feelings and ideas.
- Keep emotions in check. Don't interrupt, get angry, judge, or be defensive.
- Try putting yourself in the other person's shoes to see where he or she is coming from.

Step 5. Work it out. Talk about ways to settle the conflict that will meet both of your needs. Be willing to change and keep an open mind. Be willing to say you're sorry, forgive, and move on.

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